

Festive Guide

Taking time to think about our drinking and the way it may affect others, especially children. Information and suggestions to help plan a safe and enjoyable holiday season.



“Tis the season to be jolly”, let’s take time to think about our drinking and the way it may affect others.

More people are likely to drink beyond their limits during this season than at other times of the year. Remember that it is important that our drinking doesn’t cause harm to others, especially children.

This Festive Guide is full of information and suggestions that can help you plan a safe and enjoyable Christmas and New Year. But if you can only remember 3 things make it these:

3 simple things to do:

1. It is a good idea to make sure at least one safe non-drinking person who is known and trusted by you and your children is supervising children at family functions and events where alcohol is being served.
2. Plan some activities for your family that don't involve alcohol. This helps children see that you don't need alcohol to have a good time.
3. Plan ahead how you will get home. Never drink and drive or take a lift from someone who you think has been drinking or taking drugs. Arrange a lift or book a taxi and ensure you have money for the fare.

Who are the Alcohol Forum

The Alcohol Forum is a charity working to prevent and reduce the harms caused by alcohol in our society. We believe that everyone has a role to play in raising awareness of and responding to alcohol harm. The harms caused by alcohol have a major impact on communities. Our programmes focus on providing practical support to individuals, families, communities and public services to better understand and deal with the effects of alcohol misuse on our brains, bodies, families, relationships, workplaces and communities.

What’s in this guide?

- General information on staying safe.
- Know your standard measures.
- A Seasonal Guide to Alcohol in your home.
- Where to get help if you are worried.

Christmas and New Year is a time when friends and families will traditionally get together, work will have the office party and young adults can sometimes get involved in drinking sessions. All these can result in excessive amounts of alcohol being consumed. Mostly the season passes safely but it can also be a time of “more”, especially when it comes to alcohol.

If your child witnesses excessive drinking too often, without realising it, you may be teaching them that it's ok to use alcohol irresponsibly. Your child may be frightened or scared by the change in people's behaviour. Drinking to excess around children increases the risk of exposing them to arguments or accidents that can leave them stressed, fearful or insecure. This is particularly important to bear in mind when entertaining at home.

1 in 11 young people aged 12-18 say their parent's drinking had a negative effect on them. One of the most important ways to create less harm in your life and in your home this Christmas and New Year is to change the norm of having excess alcohol around or getting drunk. Because individuals are so different, it is difficult to give specific advice about drinking. But certain facts are clear—there's no way to speed up the brain's recovery from alcohol and no way to make good decisions when you are drinking too much, too fast.

General Information on Staying Safe

- For healthy men and women, drinking no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.
- For healthy men and women, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury.
- For children and young people under 18 years-of-age, not drinking alcohol is the safest option for their developmental health and general safety.
- For women who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.
- Please don't bring a child into your bed if you have consumed alcohol.
- If both you and your partner have been drinking it can be a good idea to get the baby sitter to stay overnight or perhaps a family member to host a sleepover.

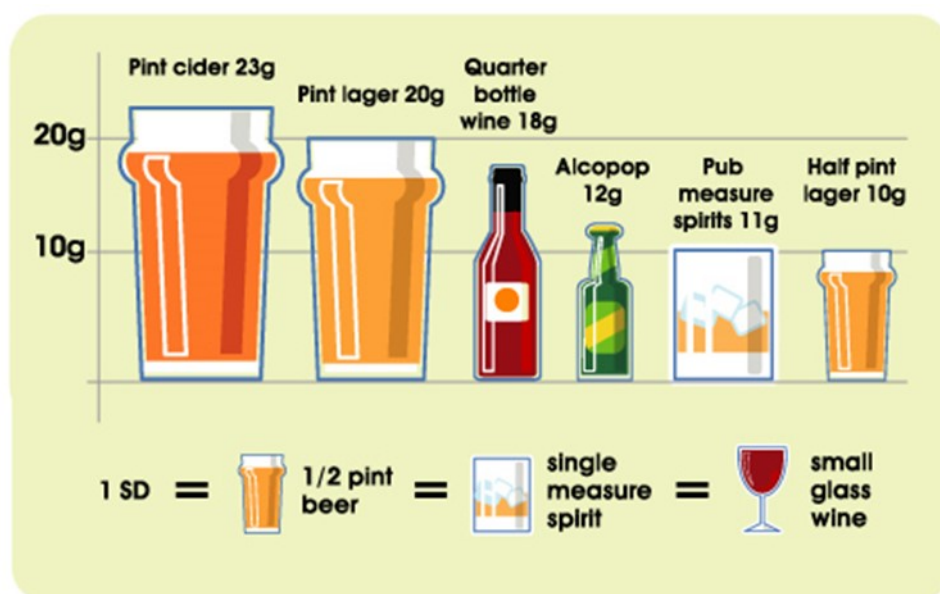
Know your standard measures.

In Ireland a standard drink (SD) has about 10 grams of pure alcohol in it. In the UK a standard drink, also called a unit of alcohol, has about 8 grams of pure alcohol.

Here are some examples of a standard drink in Ireland.

- A pub measure of spirits (35.5ml)
- A small glass of wine (12.5% volume)
- A half pint of normal beer
- An alcopop (275ml bottle)

A bottle of wine at 12.5% alcohol contains about seven standard drinks.



The low-risk limits for alcohol consumption are:

- Adult Men: 17 standard drinks (the equivalent of 21 UK units), spread out over the course of a week, with at least two to three days alcohol free.
- Adult Women: 11 standard drinks (the equivalent of 14 UK units) spread out over the course of a week, with at least two to three days alcohol free.

There is no safe limit of alcohol for pregnant women.

We know that the risk of damage to an unborn baby increases the more we drink and that binge drinking is especially harmful. It is in the child's best interest for a pregnant woman not to drink alcohol. For more information talk to your midwife or doctor.

A Seasonal Guide to Alcohol in Your Home.

Top Tips

- It is a good idea to have at least one safe, trusted, non-drinking person supervising children at family functions and events where alcohol is being served.
- Plan some alcohol-free days – your body will be glad of a break.
- Plan activities for your family that don't involve alcohol. This helps children see that you don't need alcohol to have a good time.
- Know your standard measures, avoid 'topping up' and keep track of your drinks.
- Eat before, and while, you are drinking.
- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.
- Look out for people – don't pressure others or be pressured to take a drink.
- Drink slowly and try drinks with lower alcohol content and soft drinks.
- Please don't bring a child into your bed if you have consumed alcohol.

Plan How You Are Getting Home

- Never, Ever Drink and Drive – any amount of alcohol impairs your ability to drive.
- Arrange a lift or taxi in advance if possible and ensure you have money for the fare.
- Never accept a lift from someone who you think has been drinking or taking drugs.
- Be aware that the next day you still may be affected by the alcohol you drank. It takes at least an hour for each standard drink (1/2 pint of beer) to leave your system.

Serving and Storing Alcohol in Your Home

Safety First:

- Keep alcohol out of reach and sight of children and clear away unfinished drinks.
- Know how much alcohol you have in the home and put it away safely and securely.
- Purchase an alcohol measure for the home and use it.

Be a Good Host:

- Avoid refilling your guests drink too quickly, people will want to keep track on how much they are actually drinking.
- Have alternatives to alcohol available.
- Allow your guests to pour their own drinks they may want to keep tally on how much they choose to drink.
- Have water, still and sparkling, openly available. Leave bottles of water out so that your guest can plainly see them.
- Don't force alcohol on people in order to be seen as a generous host!
- Always have food or nibbles for your guests
- If you are hosting a get together consider arranging transport for your guests or having a designated driver if needed.

WHERE TO GET HELP IF YOU ARE WORRIED

For Children and Young People

If you are worried about someone's drinking or need to speak to someone about anything that makes you feel scared or unsafe, Childline is available every day.

You can phone them for FREE at any time or, contact them by text or live chat between 10am and 4am.

Childline: 1800 66 66 66 (24 hour)

Text 'talk' to 50101 (10am-4am)

www.childline.ie (10am-4am)



**If you are in Northern Ireland call Childline
FREE on 0800 11 11**

If you feel that you need to talk to someone

Speak to your GP.

Your GP will guide you to local Alcohol and Drug services for advice and support. Family support services are also available in the community, e.g., through HSE Primary Care, Child and Family Services

HSE Drugs & Alcohol Helpline

This confidential service has both a Freephone Helpline and an email support service

FREEPHONE - 1800 459 459

Email - helpline@hse.ie

Website – www.hse.ie

Samaritans

Samaritans are there 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If you need a response immediately, it's best to call them on the phone. This number is FREE to call. You don't have to be suicidal to call the Samaritans.

FREEPHONE – 116 123

Website - www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/contact-us

Useful Websites:

www.alcoholforum.org

www.drugs.ie

www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

References:

www.alcoholforum.org www.alcoholireland.ie
www.alcoholthinkagain.com.au www.drugsandalcohol.ie



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